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JOURNEYMEN'S CLUBS.

A LITTLE work by Dr. Bruno Schoenlank, entitled *Social Conflicts Three Centuries Ago*,¹ and published in 1894, deserves attention as being a good deal better than its title, and as making a real addition to our knowledge of the sixteenth century. It is especially interesting in that it suggests some necessary criticism of certain other and more recent works that are likely to receive more notice in America and England.

The book deals with the *Gesellenvereinigungen*, or journeymen's associations, of Nuremberg in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries ; and, so far as the nature of such organizations is concerned, it adds nothing to what Schanz had said seventeen years before in his *Gesellenverbände*, except some additional and not altogether well-placed emphasis. The opening chapters suffer no little from bad rhetoric ; and they are so vague just where definiteness is most called for that it is impossible to make out what the development of Nuremberg industry really was. Dr. Schoenlank tells us, for instance, that *Hausindustrie* and the *Verleger* were encroaching on the old *Handwerk* organization ; he does not tell us in which crafts in particular that was taking place ; nor does he seem to realize that the picture of poverty-stricken master-craftsmen, dependent on merchants, is hard to reconcile with that other picture of rich and haughty master-craftsmen exploiting their journeymen. Probably some crafts were entirely transformed ; probably some quite new occupations, organized from the first on the "domestic system," sprang up during the same period ; and probably some *Handwerke* survived, with but gradual and imperceptible changes of organization as time went on. It is this presence side by side of the domestic and the gild systems which adds so greatly to the difficulties of economic history in the period between the

¹ *Sociale Kämpfe vor dreihundert Jahren : Altnürnbergische Studien.* Von Bruno Schoenlank. Leipzig, Duncker und Humblot, 1894. — 212 pp.

Reformation and the great inventions; and before we can judge of the position of affairs in any particular town or district we want some quantitative notion of the relative importance there of each system.

I have used "gild system" in default of any better term in English, although the name "gild" was seldom applied to an organized craft in the England of the later Middle Ages. In somewhat the same way modern German writers are apt to speak of *Zunftsystem*, even where, in the language of the particular time and place, no *Zünfte* existed; though they have hardly so good an excuse, since they have another term, *Handwerk*, ready to their hand. As Dr. Schoenlank shows, the term *Zunft* was abhorred by the town-council of Nuremberg, and its use was carefully avoided, until circumstances had altered and the city-fathers could afford to be careless in the eighteenth century. The council kept the several crafts under a very tight control, and regarded any unauthorized gathering of their members, or any independent decision by them in matters of trade policy, as *zünftisch*, and therefore as worthy of severe punishment. In 1592 the purse-makers of Nuremberg had to tell the purse-makers of Magdeburg that they could not as a rule communicate directly with them "because here there are no *Zünfte*." Still, it is evident that the *economic* significance of the *Handwerk* was much the same all over Germany, whether it had the *constitutional* powers of a *Zunft* or not. Dr. Schoenlank hardly brings this out with sufficient clearness. On the other hand, when he is speaking of the efforts of the journeymen to obtain some "jurisdiction" over their fellows, and connects these efforts with "differences of class interests" and the like, he seems sometimes to forget how little jurisdiction the *Handwerke* themselves enjoyed, even over the master-craftsmen.

In spite of the author's two chapters on "the beginnings of the organization" and "the progress of the *Gesellenverbände* in the fifteenth century," there is hardly any firm ground to stand on until we reach the *Gesellenordnung* of the purse-makers of 1530. Most of the religious fraternities of earlier times, of which he gives any account, were composed either of masters

or of masters and journeymen; and all alike were dissolved at the Reformation (1524). By the end of the fifteenth century, however, in those crafts in which "wandering" became the rule, the customs had already grown up which were associated with the *Schenke*; and it is for the new light it sheds on the history of this peculiar institution that the book of Dr. Schoenlank is chiefly welcome. The *Schenke* was originally, perhaps, the cup of ale or wine given from the doorstep to a passing traveler; out of this grew the meaning afterwards attached to it in artisan circles, namely, the sustenance provided by his fellows for a traveling journeyman when he had reached a new town and was looking for work; and those crafts in which there was a regular system of such aid ultimately came to be distinguished as *geschenkte Handwerke*. In the sixteenth century, however, the term had come to include a good deal more: it meant primarily the periodical meetings of the journeymen, with all the festivity there enjoyed and the business transacted, as in the ordinance of 1530, "Item, every four weeks they shall have and hold *eine Schenke*";¹ and it meant also the tavern at which the meetings were held, and which served as the temporary residence of newly arrived journeymen until work was found for them. In modern German, of course, it simply denotes, in the straightforward language of Whitney's *Dictionary*, "a retail liquor-shop" — but the word has come down in the world.

In 1530 the imperial authorities and the *Reichstag* began an attempt, which we may provisionally describe, in contemporary language, as designed for "putting an end to" *Schenken*. The *Polizei-Ordnung* of 1530 remained, however, without effect — even after it was renewed in 1548. In March, 1551, the town magistrates of Augsburg and Ulm began to remonstrate with those of Nuremberg upon their laxity, and to urge common action; and in October, 1551, the authorities of Nuremberg ventured to call the craftsmen before them and to declare the *Schenken* abolished. But the free and imperial cities were alone in their action: most of the princes, and especially those

¹ Page 58.

of the house of Austria itself, continued to disregard the ordinance; and the journeymen of those towns in which the *Schenken* were undisturbed put the craftsmen of Nuremberg who continued to work in their own town under so severe a boycott that the masters of Nuremberg were reduced to desperation, and persuaded the council, in October, 1553, to revoke its resolution. There were fresh imperial Recesses in 1551 and 1559 — all printed by Dr. Schoenlank — but nothing was done at Nuremberg, though the magistrates of Strassburg were so indignant with the sister city for its inaction that for a time they actually excluded Nuremberg men from their fair. The rulers of Nuremberg had learned that they were helpless unless the surrounding powers backed them up; and they waited until in 1567 they had induced the three circles of Franconia, Swabia and Bavaria to agree to common action. Then they made a fresh attempt; again the princes thought only of the immediate advantage of their own territories and deserted them; again there was a general boycott of Nuremberg and the cities acting with it; and at last in 1573 the magistrates were forced to make terms, and to consent to what Dr. Schoenlank calls “a compromise.” With this the journeymen were content, and came back to work; and henceforth throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in some cases well into the nineteenth, the journeymen retained their *Schenken* — or *Herbergen*, as they were soon more commonly called.

It is more difficult to judge of the inner significance of all this than to set forth its outward course. Dr. Schoenlank describes it as a struggle on the part of the journeymen for “the right of coalition” — and that to some extent it clearly was. The journeymen clung to their meetings in the *Schenke* or *Herberge*, and to their custom of fining absentees; they jealously guarded the right of *Umbfrag*, that is, the exclusive right of finding work for newcomers. A newly arrived journeyman had to make his way to the *Herberge*, where he was given bed and food till he could be provided for; and then, if he was accepted as *redlich* (honorable), that is, as bearing a good reputation, the journeymen officers regularly appointed for this

purpose (*Wirth*, later *Wirthengesellen*) went round with him to look for work (*um Arbeit schauen*). When the Strassburg authorities in 1563 sent to those of Nuremberg what we should now call a "black list" of six journeymen who had been fomenters of strife, and asked that it should be shown to the Nuremberg Girdlers, "so that they should give no work to them," the latter replied that masters had nothing to do with the finding of work: that was the journeymen's affair. This was the general custom, they went on, in all *geschenkte Handwerke* in the chief German towns; and whomsoever the journeymen might favor or hinder, the masters had to put up with it. If a journeyman hired himself directly to an employer, the journeymen fined him and held him *unredlich*. This right of the journeymen obviously gave them some advantages in determining the conditions of labor, and the masters would probably have been glad enough to destroy it. It is evidently the same right externally as that claimed by modern organized labor — the exclusion of non-union men from employment. But before we decide that the relations of the two parties to the labor contract were the same as in modern times, we have to remember: (1) that these journeymen were almost all unmarried; (2) that when employed they lived in the master's house; (3) that the masters had themselves usually been journeymen;¹ (4) that the numbers of masters and of journeymen were much the same — in one of the crafts of which we hear most there were 90 masters to 100 journeymen, and in another 50 to 70 or 80;² (5) that the Nuremberg masters certainly displayed no burning anxiety to put an end to the system; (6) that in spite of what Dr. Schoenlank says of the frequency of disputes about wages, he can produce but one example, that of 1601; and (7) that the journeymen submitted to a fifteen-hour day and that their efforts for "the limitation of the hours of labor" were limited to securing "blue Monday." Dr. Schoenlank quotes Schanz to the effect that their desire for a long rest after excessive toil was natural enough, and the remark is just: he is perhaps

¹ Cf. pp. 139, 141.

² Page 91; cf. smaller number given on pp. 62, 89.

too much occupied with the economic aspects of the holiday to have a word to say about its moral aspects.¹

This brings us to another feature of the *Schenke* which may be clearly seen in the documents which Dr. Schoenlank faithfully reprints, but of which he says nothing. It is over and over again charged against the *Schenke* that excessive drinking went on there, especially when newcomers were welcomed or old comrades parted with on setting out for their journeys; that unduly large fines were demanded from absentees, which those who attended used for their own refreshment; that the 'prentices (*Buben*) were allowed to come and given too much to drink. The text of the imperial *Polizei-Ordnung* of 1531 does not give us the impression that it was directed against a class separated from the masters by a social chasm: it deals with the "masters' sons, journeymen, servants and apprentices"² all alike. It complains of their "running around in idleness, their guzzling and gorging";³ and lays down that when a newcomer arrives in a town, he is to go to the bedel of his gild (*Zunft- oder Stubenknecht*), and where there is no *Zunft*, as in Nuremberg, to the journeymen's *Wirth* or *Vatter* (the keeper of the journeymen's tavern), or to some other trusty individual appointed by the authorities, and this person is to find him work. The journeymen are not to elect officers of their own for the purpose; and, whatever is done, "the whole business of drinking and eating on arrival and departure" is no longer to be permitted.⁴ In the final town ordinance of 1573, while the journeymen are to have their *Herberge* where newcomers are to be put up, and the officers of the journeymen (*Zuschickmeister*) are to look round for work for them, it is insisted that this shall not be made the occasion of a drinking.⁵ In this *Herberge* the *Gesellen* can have a room, and they can meet there once a month, to

¹ On this, see the language of the ordinance of 1550, p. 132.

² "Von handwerks-söhnen [or in the body of the ordinance, meister-söhn], gesellen, knechten und lehrknaben."

³ "Wegen des müssigen umgehens, schenkens und zehrens" (pp. 188, 192).

⁴ "Doch soll in und nach dem allen das sämtlich schenken und zehren zum an- und abzug oder sonst in andere weiss keineswegs hinfürō gestattet werden" (p. 189).

⁵ "Doch soll keine schenke oder zeche deswegen gehalten werden" (p. 109).

discuss their affairs ; though care is taken to insist on the presence of one of the elected officers of the *Handwerk* itself and on the extremely small powers the assembly is to exercise in the way of imposing fines without special authorization. But equal care is taken to restrict the amount of drinking, to prohibit indecent songs and gaming, and to prevent brawls.

The evidence is too large and too consistent through more than a century to allow us to suppose that these moral dangers in the *Schenken* were pure inventions on the part of the masters. They may, of course, have been unduly emphasized by the latter, to conceal their own economic purpose; but they ought at least to be mentioned by modern writers, if we are to have a complete view of the situation. One knows with what lofty contempt Marxists regard those who venture such remarks : such things are all bound up with "the standard of living," they tell us, or are "economically conditioned." But the practice of writing social history with practically no mention of some of its important ethical aspects goes far toward creating from the socialist side an "economic man" almost as unreal as that of the economist.

It will be remembered that in the recent work of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb on English trade-unionism, the authors declare that they cannot trace beyond the eighteenth century any "continuous organizations of wage-earners for maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment." They have waved aside the examples of mediæval yeomen's or bachelors' companies in England ; and though it might still be maintained that some of these are best explained as "*continuous organizations of wage-earners*," Mr. and Mrs. Webb have certainly cast some doubt upon the interpretation given to one such case—the Bachelors' Company of the London Tailors in the sixteenth century. The question of mediæval journeymen's associations in England must be left open for the production of further evidence;¹ and meantime those who are interested in it may be referred to Professor Brentano's article — interesting, among other reasons, for the glimpse of autobiography it contains — in

¹ For a fresh example, see *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XI, 214.

Braun's *Archiv für Soziale Gesetzgebung* (vol. viii). But Mr. and Mrs. Webb's book also contains some information which, looked at from the standpoint now reached, receives a new significance. They call attention to "the existence" in the eighteenth century "of journeymen's associations in most of the skilled trades." They point out that "the earliest trade unions arose among journeymen whose skill and standard of life had been for centuries encouraged and protected by legal or customary regulations," and again that

the typical "trade club" of the town artisan of this time was an isolated ring of highly skilled journeymen, who were even more decisively marked off from the mass of manual workers than from the small class of capitalist employers. The customary enforcement of the apprenticeship prescribed by the Elizabethan statutes and the high premiums usually exacted from parents long maintained a virtual monopoly of the better-paid handicrafts in the hands of an almost hereditary caste of "tradesmen," in whose ranks the employers themselves had for the most part served their apprenticeship. Enjoying, as they did, this legal or customary protection, they found their trade clubs of use mainly for the provision of friendly benefits, and for "higgling" with their masters for better terms.¹

Such trade clubs are regarded by Mr. and Mrs. Webb as altogether new, and as "due to something peculiar to the century;" and they are described as "springing not from any particular institution, but from every opportunity for the meeting together of wage-earners of the same trade."²

The more we look into these trade clubs, however, the more we are struck by the resemblances between them and those German institutions of an earlier century which Dr. Schoenlank and others have described. That the gatherings were usually monthly in each case might be a mere coincidence. But when we find that "the relief of traveling journeymen was a prominent object of the early unions"³ in some English industries, the resemblance seems to go to the essence of the institution. And when we are told by Mr. and Mrs. Webb that in some instances

¹ History of Trade Unionism, p. 38.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

"the journeymen of a particular trade frequented certain public houses, at which they heard of situations vacant, and the 'house of call' became thus the nucleus of an organization,"¹ the inference seems natural that in these "houses of call" we have an institution like the German *Schenke* or *Herberge*, with probably a similar past history.

The "houses of call" are mentioned in certain documents referring to the tailoring trade in London; and these Mr. F. W. Galton, Mr. Webb's assistant in the preparation of material for the *History of Trade Unionism*, has since published under the auspices of the new London School of Economics.² Mr. Galton quotes a description of the houses of call given by a contemporary in 1747, from which we learn that "masters go there to enquire when they want hands," and "custom has established it into a kind of law that the house of call gives them credit for victuals and drink when they are unemployed."³ As to the character of some of the proceedings at the monthly meetings, we may form some idea from what Samuel Bamford tells us of his visit to the trade clubs of London in 1815: "They would generally be found in a large room, an elevated seat being placed for the chairman. On first opening the door, the place seemed dimmed by a suffocating vapor of tobacco. . . . Every man would have his half pint of porter before him."⁴

But one need not stop at the eighteenth century. Let any one read, in the last chapter of the *History of Trade Unionism*, the vivid account of English trade-union life of to-day from the pen of one who has shared it. In the account of "going on tramp," we hear of the footsore traveler making his way to the public house at which the local lodge is held, and refreshing himself before starting off to find the secretary; of the secretary writing an order "to the publican" to provide the full relief of sixpence and a bed, and telling the tramp to repair to any suitable situation he may know of in the morning; and of many like details. Let any one remember how the "Non-

¹ *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 22.

² *Select Documents Illustrating the History of Trade-Unionism. I. The Tailoring Trade, 1896.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4, n.

⁴ *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (ed. of 1893), II, 25.

conformist conscience" of the chapel-going and teetotal workman of the generation now passing away used to look on the lodge-night and its dangers. One will, I think, begin to doubt whether there has not been for centuries more continuity than is commonly supposed in the life of the skilled artisan class in the older trades.

Apropos of certain trade societies of 1721, Mr. Galton himself remarks that "we may infer from the subsequent events that the origin of the organization was not so recent as the employers supposed," or rather stated.¹ My own impression is that we shall by and by find that, like the usages of the German journeymen in the eighteenth century that centered in the *Herberge*, the trade clubs of eighteenth-century England were broken-down survivals from an earlier period, undergoing, with the advent of the *married* journeyman and other causes, the slow transformation from which they emerged in the nineteenth century as the nuclei of the modern trade unions.

The point is of so little importance in reference to the problems of this century that one is almost afraid to call attention to it, lest it should be supposed that more significance is attached to it than is really intended by the present writer. The conditions of this century are new in so real a sense that, as has already been pointed out in the foregoing criticism of Dr. Schoenlank, they have called forth substantially new institutions. Even if it could be proved that any trade society of to-day is historically a continuation of some definitely constituted society of a much earlier date, the fact would have but slight significance; and for the present even that much is not maintained. What is suggested is only that the habit of acting together in certain ways, which we find to characterize the journeymen of the eighteenth century, had been formed in a much earlier period.

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Since the above was written, I have received from a London artisan a very interesting account of his experiences when

¹ The Tailoring Trade, p. xv.

he came up from the country to work as a silk-hat finisher in 1856. It describes conditions that have already passed away, and will soon be forgotten; and these conditions present features closely resembling in many respects the usages of the journeymen's societies of earlier centuries, as set forth by Dr. Schoenlank.

There were then four distinct societies in London, *viz.*, the Blue society (composed of Christy's workmen), the Bull society, the Nelson society and the Fair Trade. . . . In February, 1858, the Blue society was reorganized, and I was asked to be secretary. I was so for three months, until the rules were passed. We sat at the "Anchor and Eight Bells," Bermondsey Street, to take contributions. While passing the rules, and at all quarterly and general meetings, we were crowded into the large room over the tap-room and bar. Smoking went on, at least eighty per cent smoking. From 90 to 120 would be present, and some would pay a sixpenny fine and stay away. The President, Committee, and Secretary would sit at one end of the room. . . . Pint pots were very plentiful on the different tables, and at intervals there was a pause, the pot-man coming into the room crying out: "Give your orders, gentlemen." These meetings were held at 8.30 (no matter what time work ceased at the factory), to give members at Christy's retail shops a chance to be present. I mention this because many of the men would go into the "turn-house" an hour or two early, as it would be too far for them to go home and return. There was therefore a great amount of drinking before the meeting, and a good few would stay after the meeting until closing time. . . . It was the landlord of the turn-house in Bermondsey Street who was treasurer.

Now that all the societies have been united, the trade turn-house is still at a public-house; but all delegate and general meetings are held in the large room of the Southwark Radical Club; and there is no drinking during the meetings. Indeed, the leading spirits in the last great strike were lifelong abstainers.

Of the drinking usages in the workshops themselves my informant also gives some particulars. On the day he began to work, he tells me:

I found it was necessary to pay "a maiden garnish" of five shillings, it being my first shop in London. On this floor there were 66 finishers in three "shops" or "batteries": 12 men in one, 22 in

another and 32 in the one in which I worked. To this "garnish" 28 men paid twopence each (there being three apprentices and myself, making the 32); so to drink my health and wish me well nine shillings and eightpence was spent in beer, on that account alone, on that day in that battery. I was very anxious about my work,—coming, as I had, from a country shop,—and if it had not "served turn" (*i.e.*, been passed by the foreman), I should have been "off"; and the 28 men who had partaken of my "maiden garnish" would have paid twopence each as "treatings off"; and all I should get would be the right to drink from the four and eightpence worth of beer. I won't moralize, but I must say I thought this a cruel wrong, and I determined to make a dead set against that custom as soon as I got "the hop of the cage"; and in three months I carried in that shop a resolution that any man "off" from that battery should receive the twopences in money, which was called "dry garnish."

There were all kinds of other dues. If there was a vacant plank, and a man wished to move to it, he had to pay "a plank gallon." If a man had never before put on a silk "under," if it was known, there was "a fancy gallon" to pay, and many others of a like kind. Moreover, the two publicans, one each side of the factory gates, had the free run of the place; and they and their pot-men came in frequently for orders. There was never much ready money with the men, but there was a man in each shop empowered by a publican to write tickets for beer, to be paid from their wages, with usurious interest, at the end of the week.

This is, however, almost all a thing of the past. The present "Rules of the Journeymen Hatters' Fair Trade Union of Great Britain and Ireland" enact that

All dues, such as marriage beer, garnishes, maiden garnishes, plank beer, fancy gallons and wager beer, are done away with.

My informant tells me that the publican's agent has also been abolished.

There was and is still, though it is evidently decaying, a curious system of shop jurisdiction, which presents many apparently archaic features. The procedure preserves several terms on which modern dictionaries give no help.

When workman A called B by an opprobrious name, which the latter resented, B could "weigh out the caulk," by declaring, "If

your name is A, a man of this shop and a shopmate of mine, I caulk you: prove me (to be so and so) before you hat, or pay sixteen pence for larking."

At this the "constable" of the shop called out, "Gentlemen, the caulker is out." Every man in that battery had ceased work. Now A could either "call his words in again" or "give the wrong insist." If he did the latter, the constable at once said, "a garrett in ten minutes." The garrett was formed by the men of the battery; and if they decided that A deserved the reproach, he was fined four shillings, which was spent in beer in that battery. The case could, however, have been taken to the higher court—"the dozening," the men for which would have been selected from a dozen shops.

The present rules of the amalgamated society still enter with some detail into "caulkers," "wrong insists," "garretts," and "dozenings"; but their purpose is "to prevent them as much as possible." The fines now go to the general funds, and drunken men are disqualified from voting or "insisting."

There is one other term used in the hatters' trade, which is so odd and apparently so completely unknown to philologists, that it may be well to mention it here. An apprentice put under a journeyman for a period of six months' instruction is called his "whimsey," or said to be "under whimsey"; the instructor is called the "whimsey-master," and the occupation of the boy is called "whimseying."

It is certainly surprising to come across so many quaint usages in an industry which would seem to have passed through the "domestic" or "sub-contract" stage in the eighteenth century;¹ and which one would have supposed to have been altogether transformed by the substitution of silk for beaver at the beginning of the present century. This account suggests the desirability of securing trustworthy records of old trade customs, before they are destroyed (in many cases very properly destroyed) by temperance, book-learning, the newspaper and increasing freedom of intercourse.

W. J. A.

¹ Howell, *Conflicts of Labour and Capital*, ch. ii, § 55.